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ABSTRACT

This document is a chapter in "The Principles and Practice of Educational Management," which aims to provide a systematic and analytical introduction to the study of educational management. The structure of the book reflects the main substantive areas of educational leadership and management, and most of the major themes are covered in the volume's 19 chapters, of which this is one. This chapter examines the role of societal culture on educational leadership. It discusses the meaning of culture and the differences between societal and organizational culture and presents two sets of dimensions as a framework for studying the relationship between leadership and societal cultures. It illustrates a societal and cross-cultural perspective of educational leadership through the application of "cultural dimensions," and identifies challenges to the future development of the field of societal and cross-cultural comparative educational leadership. Since culture forms the context in which school leadership is exercised, it exerts considerable influence on school leaders' actions. But leaders operate within a specific organizational framework, as well, and it is important to understand the differences between societal and organizational culture. Societal cultures differ mostly at the level of basic values, whereas organizational cultures operate at more superficial levels, making them more amenable to management and change. Societal cultures can be described by seven cultural dimensions: power-distributed/power-concentrated; group-oriented/self-oriented; consideration/aggression; proactivism/fatalism; generative/replicative; limited relationship/holistic relationship; and male influence/female influence. Examples of how these dimensions operate in the U.S. and Japan are provided, along with strategies educational leaders can use to clarify their roles in different cultural dimensions. (Contains 35 references.) (RJM)

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School Leadership in Context – Societal and Organisational Cultures

Clive Dimmock and Allan Walker

A burgeoning literature on educational leadership has developed over the last decade. A significant part of this has looked at the relationship between leadership and organisational culture. Most of these studies have targeted English-speaking Western school settings, but without formally recognising the influence of the national or societal culture. Meanwhile, the influence of societal culture on educational leadership – even in Anglo-American societies – has rarely been studied. With few notable exceptions (for example, Bush, et al., 1998; Bush and Qiang, 2000; Hallinger and Kantamara, 2000; Morris and Lo, 2000; Walker and Dimmock, 1999; 2000a), an important void in our understanding of school leadership exists, especially in regard to non-English-speaking Western and non-Western school settings. The body of knowledge on educational leadership and culture is thus heavily skewed towards Anglo-American studies of organisational culture. The systematic study of school leadership on a comparative and international basis – using societal and cross-cultural analysis – has yet to develop (Dimmock 1998, Dimmock and Walker, 1998a; 1998b). In short, surprisingly little is known about the relationship between societal culture and educational leadership.

This chapter has four sections. The first briefly discusses the meaning of culture and the differences between societal and organisational culture. The second presents two sets of dimensions as a framework for studying the relationship between leadership and societal – and organisational – cultures. The third illustrates a societal and cross-cultural perspective of educational leadership through application of the dimensions. The fourth identifies challenges to the future development of the field of societal and cross-cultural comparative educational leadership.

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The meaning of culture

Culture forms the context in which school leadership is exercised. It thus exerts a considerable influence on how and why school leaders think and act

as they do. Studies of leadership that ignore or minimise the cultural context risk constructing only partial understandings of how leadership in different settings is played out. As discussed elsewhere (see for example, Dimmock and Walker, 1998a; Walker and Dimmock, in press) culture is an amorphous and contested concept. For the purposes of this chapter, however, 'culture' is defined as the enduring sets of beliefs, values, ideologies and behaviours that distinguish one group of people from another (Hofstede, 1991). Moreover, the group of people in question can be conceptualised at a number of interrelated levels, from the micro-school or organisational level, through local and regional levels to the macro-national or societal level.

At the outset, we do not claim that 'culture' provides a comprehensive explanation to account for educational leadership and its different characteristics around the globe. Clearly, other factors, such as politics, economics, religion and demography may play a crucial part. The boundary lines between culture and these other factors are, however, quite blurred. Hofstede (1991), for example, argues that all the 'other' factors are reducible to, or at least strongly influenced by, culture in the end. Whatever one's view on this issue, there is no denying that the influence of societal culture on educational leadership has been a neglected area of research.

Differences between societal and organisational cultures

There are fundamental qualitative differences between societal and organisational culture. Societal cultures differ mostly at the level of basic values, while organisational cultures differ mostly at the level of more superficial practices, as reflected in the recognition of particular symbols, heroes, and rituals (Hofstede, 1991). This allows organisational cultures to be deliberately managed and changed, whereas societal or national cultures are more enduring and change only gradually over longer time periods. School leaders influence, and in turn are influenced by, the organisational culture. Societal culture, on the other hand, is a given, being outside the sphere of influence of an individual school leader.

It is logical to expect that the underpinning structures, processes and practices found in schools reflect culture at both societal (including regional and local) level and organisational level. However, little or nothing is known of the ways in which the different types and levels of culture interact at school level. Corresponding research in the corporate world suggests that organisational culture – even in multinational companies – fails to erase or even diminish societal culture (Adler, 1997). Indeed, Laurent (1983) found that far from organisational culture diminishing the effect of societal cultural in multinational companies, the differences among employees were more pronounced than those among employees working for organisations in their native lands. That is, when working for multinational companies, Chinese became more

Chinese, Japanese more Japanese, British more British, and so on. In the absence of causal explanation, one can only speculate as to why this should be so. No equivalent study has been conducted in education and, of course, it is invariably dangerous to assume the same conditions apply to education as to the corporate world.

If we aim to study the interaction of different levels of culture, then we should first differentiate between them. A promising way of so doing is to identify a set of dimensions for each, as outlined in the following sections.

Educational leadership and dimensions of societal culture

Scholars in the field are beginning to seek ways of making authentic comparisons between educational leadership in different societies. Hitherto, comparative study of school leaders has been largely confined to descriptive country-by-country studies, with minimal analysis and only meagre attempt to draw rigorous, systematic comparison based on culture and cultural difference.

Over the past few years the present authors have focused on developing a systematic framework and methodology for a robust comparison of educational leadership based on cross-cultural analysis (see Dimmock, 2000; Dimmock and Walker, 1998a; 1998b; 2000a; 2000b; Walker and Dimmock, 1999). In this section, we provide an outline of the cultural dimensions part of the methodology, while encouraging readers to pursue the references provided if they are interested in the full model.

An authentic approach to the systematic cross-cultural comparative study of educational leadership is predicated on agreement as to what constitutes first, educational leadership, and second, societal culture. Elsewhere, we have provided a full exposition of both, recognising eight components of educational leadership and six (recently revised to seven) dimensions of societal culture (Walker and Dimmock, 1999). Cross-cultural comparison of school leaders in different societies is achieved by applying each of the dimensions of societal culture to educational leadership. Below, we outline the components of leadership followed by the dimensions of societal culture.

Educational leadership

Eight interrelated elements of leadership are recognised. Although other elements might have been included, the eight provide a convenient and manageable way of encapsulating school leadership. Close and complex interrelationships exist between all eight and between these and other school functions such as curriculum, educational structures and teaching and learning. The eight are:

- *collaboration and participation*: the ability to empower others, to collaborate and share power is a necessary part of contemporary leadership (Pounder, 1998)
- *motivation*: inspiring effort and commitment among followers through motivation is a core leadership function (Sergiovanni, 1995)
- *planning*: visioning and strategic planning are central leadership roles (Quong et al., 1998)
- *decision-making*: decision-making is a set of skills and techniques often exercised politically
- *interpersonal communication*: communication as a key leadership practice is vital in enabling understanding and sharing of knowledge and information (Goldring and Rallis, 1993)
- *conflict management*: leadership involves the management of conflicts within the school community (Maurer, 1991)
- *evaluation and appraisal*: staff appraisal and evaluation is a key leadership responsibility (Cardno and Piggot-Irvine, 1997)
- *staff- and professional-development*: leadership involves developing staff professionalism in line with school needs (Darling-Hammond, 1997).

We do not claim that the eight elements present a complete picture or that they address all the complexities of real-life leadership situations. Rather, our contention is that for purposes of analysis, it is useful to recognise them as key operational areas of leadership. In studying the influence of societal culture on educational leadership, the eight elements described above need to be combined with key cultural dimensions. In the following section, we outline these dimensions.

Dimensions of societal culture

The identification of cultural dimensions, defined as core axes around which significant sets of values, beliefs and practices cluster, not only facilitates their description and measurement in terms of societal culture, but promotes comparison between cultures. Dimensions provide a common baseline against which cultural characteristics at the societal level can be described, gauged and compared (Dimmock and Walker, 1998b). Despite their usefulness, however, we agree with Hofstede's (1994) cautionary remarks about dimensions, when he claims that the same limitations apply to them as to culture itself: 'They are also constructs that should not be reified. They do not "exist"; they are tools for analysis which may or may not clarify a situation' (ibid.: 40). The dimensions we describe, therefore, should not be regarded as unidimensional. They do not aim to polarise cultural influence on educational leadership, but rather to provide a basis for comparison. For example, we would argue that it is possible for school leaders within a given culture to be

both aggressive and considerate at different times in different situations. Therefore, although the dimensions are presented as pairs of alternatives, to view them as polarities along a uni-dimensional scale is too simplistic and could lead to serious misconceptions (Dimmock and Walker, 1998b).

The following dimensions of societal culture – each of which is a continuum – represent a synthesis of research findings, reworking of previous studies and relabelling of concepts (Walker and Dimmock, 1999):

1 *Power-distributed/power-concentrated*: power is either distributed more equally among the various levels of a culture or is more concentrated. Hofstede (1991) calls this 'power distance'. In societies where power is widely distributed through decentralisation and institutionalised democracy, inequity is treated as undesirable and effort is made to reduce it where possible. In societies where power is commonly concentrated in the hands of the few, inequities are often accepted and legitimised. Some societies, such as Asian, tend towards power concentration, while others, such as Anglo-American, favour power distribution.
2 *Group-oriented/self-oriented*: people within a given culture tend to focus on *self* or on their place within a *group*. This dimension describes the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups and the closeness of relationships between persons. In *self-oriented* cultures, relations are fairly loose and relational ties tend to be based on self-interest. People in such societies primarily regard themselves as individuals first, and members of a group, second. People in *self-oriented* cultures perceive themselves to be more independent and self-reliant. In *group-oriented* cultures, ties between people are tight, relationships are firmly structured and individual needs are subservient to the collective needs. Important collectivist values include harmony, face-saving, filial piety and equality of reward distribution among peers. In *group-oriented* cultures, status is traditionally defined by factors such as age, sex, kinship, educational standing, or formal organisational position. In *self-oriented* cultures, people are judged and status ascribed in line with individual performance or what has been accomplished individually.
3 *Consideration/aggression*: in so-called *aggression* cultures, achievement is stressed, competition dominates and conflicts are resolved through the exercise of power and assertiveness. School norms are set by the best students, the system rewards academic achievement while failure at school is seen as serious. In an organisational context, assertiveness is taken as a virtue; selling oneself, decisiveness and emphasis on career are all valued. In contrast, *consideration* societies emphasise relationship, solidarity and resolution of conflicts by compromise and negotiation. At school, norms tend to be set by the average students, while system rewards reflect students' social adaptation and failure is not seen as disastrous. In the work-

place, assertiveness is not appreciated, people are expected to undersell themselves, and emphasis is placed on quality of life and intuition.

4 *Proactivism/fatalism*: this dimension reflects the proactive or 'we can change things around here' attitude in some cultures, and the willingness to accept things as they are in others – a fatalistic perspective. The dimension addresses how different societies and cultures react to and manage uncertainty and change in social situations. In proactive societies, people tend to believe that they have at least some control over situations and over change. They are tolerant of different opinions and are not excessively threatened by unpredictability. In fatalistic cultures, on the other hand, people believe 'what is meant to be, will be'. Uncertainty is often viewed as psychologically uncomfortable and disruptive, and people seek to reduce uncertainty and to limit risks by hanging on to the way things have always been done. This often involves the inflexible retention of rules and dogmas that breed orthodoxy. People hold that these principles are fixed and that they have little or no control over them.

5 *Generative/replicative*: some cultures appear more predisposed towards innovation, or the generation of new ideas and methods, whereas other cultures appear more inclined to replicate or to adopt ideas and approaches from elsewhere. In *generative* cultures people tend to value the generation of knowledge, new ideas and ways of working. They are more likely to seek creative solutions to problems, to develop policies and ways of operating which are original and unique – which stretch and challenge knowledge in various directions. In such cultures, new inventions and approaches often appear. In *replicative* cultures, people are more likely to adopt innovations, ideas and inventions developed elsewhere. While these are either adopted *in toto* or undergo partial adaptation, there is little consideration of alignment to the indigenous cultural context.

6 *Limited relationship/holistic relationship*: this dimension reflects the importance of connections and relationships in cultures. In some cultures, interpersonal relationships are limited by the fixed rules applied to given situations, whereas in other cultures, relationships are more holistic, or underpinned by association and personal considerations. In *limited relationship* cultures, interactions and relationships tend to be determined by explicit rules which are applied equally to everyone. For example, when a leader needs to make a decision on a promotion, objective criteria are applied regardless of who are the candidates. Relationships matter less than rules. In *holistic* cultures on the other hand, greater attention is given to relationship obligations (for example, kinship, patronage and friendship) than to impartially applied rules (see Walker and Dimmock, 1999). Dealings in formal and structured situations in *holistic* cultures are driven more by complex, personal considerations than by the specific situation or by formal rules and regulations.

7 *Male influence/female influence*: this dimension has been added to capture the degrees of influence in society exerted by men and women. In some societies, the male domination of decision-making in political, economic and professional life is perpetuated. In others, women have come to play a significant role. Moreover, the respective roles played by men and women may be undergoing considerable change in some societies, while remaining relatively static in others.

The seven dimensions of culture outlined above represent salient characteristic values underpinning societies. They are generic in the sense that they are present in every culture, but to different degrees – hence their expression in terms of a range or continuum. In the following section, we illustrate the application of societal cultural dimensions to educational leadership.

Illustrating societal and cross-cultural analysis of educational leadership

One of the main distinctions between the US and Japanese societies is the Japanese group orientation versus American individualism (McAdams, 1993). Cheng (1998) agrees, holding that Chinese societies, such as Hong Kong and the People's Republic of China (PRC), are more collectivist than individualist. Both these observations are supported by Hofstede's (1991) empirical findings. In terms of the framework presented in this chapter, Japanese and Chinese principals are more group- than self-oriented. A repercussion of this in schools, and on principals' beliefs and actions, is that in many English-speaking and non-English-speaking Western societies principals are more inclined to consider the individual needs of both teachers and students in the operation of schools. As Cheng (1998) states: 'In European nations such as Germany, France and The Netherlands, schools cater to students with different aptitudes and interests' (ibid.: 16). In East Asian societies, such as China, Thailand and Japan, on the other hand, education is seen as a means by which students adapt to the expectations of the community. In such group-oriented societies, the role of the school and the principal may focus on developing and ensuring harmony among staff and enforcing common, standard approaches to governance, organisation, curriculum and instruction.

Group-oriented cultures, such as China, Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong, and South American countries, including Venezuela and Columbia, are collectivist (also see Cheng, 1998) and tend to place the preservation of relationships above pursuit of tasks. In contrast, self-oriented societies, including the USA, Australia, France and Germany (Hofstede, 1991; McAdams, 1993) generally focus on task achievement rather than the maintenance of relationships. Principals in such societies have a tendency to put task achievement before relationships, and to judge staff on the basis of performance. Such

principals may be classified according to our framework as engaging in *limited relationships*. In contrast, promotion in the *holistic relationship* societies is often made on the basis of a combination of contacts, relationships and performance.

Status, respect and power are variously attributed according to different cultural norms (Hofstede, 1991; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997). For example, in Chinese societies, respect may be attributed to position, age or family background, whereas in New Zealand, it is attributed more to personal or on-the-job competence (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997). In societies where power is linked to extrinsic factors, leadership tends to be from the 'top' and exercised in an authoritarian or autocratic manner. School principals in many Asian countries illustrate well the *power-concentrated* nature of their society. In contrast, principals in other societies are located towards the *power-distributed* end of the spectrum. For example, McAdams (1993) found that German principals, because of their relationships with staff and their route to the principalship, were collaborative and collegial, even more so 'than is typically the case in the United States' (ibid.: 118). A further aspect of power concentration in society is the likelihood that devolving power through school-based management is harder to achieve, or that it assumes a different form from its manifestation in power-distributed societies (Dimmock and Walker, 2000a).

Culture influences how people deal with conflict and participation. According to Bond (1991), the disturbance of interpersonal relations and group harmony through conflict can cause lasting animosity in Chinese cultures. As a result, the Chinese tend to avoid open confrontation and assertiveness. In the school or group context, this is manifested by teachers and principals tending to avoid open disagreement, with the leader's view apparently being accepted (Walker et al., 1996). Principals in such cultures tend to avoid situations which risk conflict and to rely instead on authoritarian decision-making modes. A possible side effect of conflict avoidance and a requirement for harmonic relationships is that decisions and policies are seldom challenged, or approached creatively, by the group. In such cultures, classified by us as *replicative*, system administrators, principals and schools may readily accept policies and edicts and tend towards preserving the status quo.

Hofstede (1991) and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) suggest that cultures differ in their approach to change. Some societies tend to be more creative and innovative (termed *generative* in our model), while others seem to be more *replicative*. These differences find expression in the curriculum and schooling of different countries. In Australia there tends to be a reasonably high tolerance for change and people in schools take a proactive stance to engineer the effect of change on their work lives. Policy and operational changes are challenged, questioned and negotiated at the school level

and outside. In other societies, change and uncertainty is accepted almost as a *coup de grâce*, as the way things are and are meant to be. For example, principals in countries such as Thailand and China which tend toward this fatalistic view, tend to rely on established philosophies, responsibilities and power relationships to provide staff with security, while accepting and implementing change, whether they agree with it or not (Hallinger et al., 1999).

Finally, in an insightful analysis of China, Bush and Qiang (2000) reveal how the Chinese culture has periodically undergone four phases of reform, each of which has left its mark on contemporary school leadership. First, the traditional culture, elements of which continue with respect for authority, collectivism and harmony in relationships. Second, the introduction of socialism after the Second World War which reaffirmed traditional values while at the same time politicising schools and the principal's role. A third – more recent phase – has seen an entrepreneurial spirit introduced as principals seek innovative ways to generate non-government sources of school income. Finally, as reported by Coleman et al. (1998), schools continue to reflect society at large in their unmistakable patriarchal nature.

Insights such as those presented above are illustrative of cultural influences on leadership practices. It is prudent, however, to resist making value judgements as part of any comparison, since cultures place different emphases on what they regard as effective practices.

While the application of the dimensions for cross-cultural comparison is capable of exposing interesting and worthwhile insights, it is only a starting point. Many issues remain outstanding in the construction of a cross-cultural comparative approach to leadership, some of which are briefly addressed towards the end of this chapter.

Educational leadership and the dimensions of organisational culture

Leaders are responsible for building and maintaining the organisational culture. In turn, the organisational culture is expressed through customs, traditions, ceremonies, rituals, norms, heroes and heroines that come to characterise each school. It is visible in words and actions as people go about their daily activities. Culture is a constructed reality, and as such, demands considerable thought, skill, integrity and consistency on the part of the leader to build and maintain in a way that connects (Dimmock, 2000) all members of the school community.

Clarifying the leader's role in building and maintaining organisational culture is but one aspect to be considered. Another equally important issue concerns the characteristics of the particular organisational culture to be cultivated. How can leaders and others identify the organisational culture they

have, want or need? And is there a useful classification or taxonomy that presents the range or types of cultures to facilitate comparison? We address both of these questions below.

Research studies on the organisational cultures of companies have found large differences in their practices (symbols, heroes, rituals), but only minor differences in their values (Hofstede, 1995). Most of the variation in practices can be accounted for by six dimensions, although further validation of these is required. These six provide a useful baseline for organisational culture in our framework. We have, however, adapted the six, in line with our own research (Dimmock and Wildy, 1995). The six dimensions are as follows:

1 *Process- and/or outcomes-oriented*: leaders, along with their school communities, are instrumental in shaping the relative emphasis placed on process and outcome. Some cultures are predisposed towards technical and bureaucratic routines and processes, while others emphasise outcomes. Evidence suggests that in outcomes-oriented cultures people perceive greater homogeneity in practices, whereas people in process-oriented cultures perceive greater differences in their practices. Some schools are process-orientated, emphasising the processes and the skills of decision-making, and teaching and learning, while others are results-oriented, stressing learning achievements, such as examination results. Many schools and school systems are currently reforming their curricula to reflect specific student learning targets or outcomes expressed in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes, indicating a trend towards designing curricula on the basis of, and measuring student and school performance by, a learning outcomes approach. Strong cultures tend to be more homogeneous and therefore results- or outcomes-oriented. It is easier to target outcomes than define effective processes.
2 *Task- and/or person-oriented*: leaders are influential in determining the blend of task and person emphasis in schools. In task-oriented organisational cultures, emphasis is placed on job performance and maximising productivity, while human considerations, such as staff welfare, take second place and may even be neglected. Conversely, person-oriented cultures accentuate the care, consideration and welfare of employees. Blake and Mouton (1964) recognised these leadership orientations in the 1960s. Applied to schools, a task-oriented culture exacts maximum work effort and performance out of its teachers in a relatively uncaring work environment. A person-oriented culture on the other hand, values, promotes and shows consideration for the welfare of its teachers. It is conceivable that some schools might score highly (or lowly) on both task and person orientations.
3 *Professional and/or parochial*: in professional cultures, qualified personnel identify primarily with their profession, whose standards are usually

defined at national or international level. In parochial cultures, members identify most readily with the organisation for which they work. Sociologists, such as Gouldner (1957) have long recognised this phenomenon in their distinction between locals and cosmopolitans. In regard to schools, some leaders and teachers, especially those with an external frame of reference, are primarily committed to the wider system context and to the teaching profession as a whole, while others with a strong internal frame of reference are more committed to the particular school in which they work.

4 *Open and/or closed*: this dimension refers to the ease with which resources, such as, people, money and ideas, are exchanged between the organisation and its environment. The greater the transfer and exchange of resources between the environment and the organisation, the more open the culture. Schools and their leaders vary between those which champion outside involvement in their affairs and maximum interchange with their environment, and those which eschew such interaction and communication, preferring a more closed, exclusive approach. Trends in education over the last decade have favoured the opening of school cultures, particularly to parental influence and involvement.

5 *Control and linkage*: an important part of organisational culture concerns the way in which authority and control are exerted and communicated between leaders and other members. This dimension has three subdimensions:

(a) *Formal–informal.* Organisations vary in the extent to which their practices are guided by rules, regulations and 'correct procedures' on the one hand, and the extent to which they reflect a more relaxed, spontaneous and intuitive approach on the other. Highly formalised organisations conform to the classic bureaucracies; they emphasise definition of rules and roles, they tend towards inflexibility and are often characterised by austere interpersonal relationships. By contrast, informal organisations have fewer rules dictating procedures, roles are often ill-defined, they display flexibility in their modes of work and interpersonal relationships tend to be more relaxed.

(b) *Tight–loose.* This gauges the degree to which members feel there is strong commitment to the shared beliefs, values and practices of an organisation. Such strong commitment might come through hierarchical supervision and control, or through members' own self-motivation. An organisation which has strong homogeneity and commitment in respect of its members' values and practices is tightly controlled (whether control is externally imposed by superordinates or self-imposed by employees). Conversely, a loosely controlled culture is one with only weak commitment to, or acceptance of, shared beliefs, values

i3

and practices, and little or no control is exerted to achieve homogeneity either by superordinates or by members themselves.

(c) *Direct–indirect*. This aspect captures the linkages and patterns of communication through which power, authority and decisions are communicated. In some organisations, managers assume direct personal responsibility to perform certain tasks and to communicate directly with their staff, often circumventing intermediate levels in the vertical hierarchy or chain of command. In other organisations, managers exert control indirectly by delegating to staff the tasks they would otherwise do themselves.

6 *Pragmatic and/or normative*: this dimension defines the way an organisation serves its clients, customers or patrons. Some display a flexible, pragmatic policy aimed at meeting the diversity of customer needs. Others exhibit more rigid or normative approaches in responding bureaucratically, failing to meet individual needs. This dimension measures the degree of client orientation. In the educational context, some schools consciously try to meet individual student needs by offering a more diversified curriculum with flexible timetables and alternative teaching strategies. They mould their educational services to meet student needs. Others may be less student focused, expecting them to fit into the agenda determined for them by the school. A school's mission and strategy as well as its leadership shapes its degree of pragmatism.

Challenges in conducting cross-cultural study of educational leadership

In pioneering new approaches there are bound to be imperfections, unresolved issues and many challenges (for a full discussion of these, see Walker and Dimmock, in press). The concept of culture itself, for example, has generated multiple definitions and ambiguities. Alone, it does not have the explanatory power to account for all the differences between schools in different societies or regions. As previously acknowledged, economic, political, religious and demographic factors, for example, may also play a key role, and their relationship to culture is equivocal.

A further challenge is the dynamic nature of many societal cultures as they become truly multicultural. Such cultural 'hybridity' increases the heterogeneity of cultures and creates as much divergence within them as between. A related issue concerns the tension between 'traditionalist' notions of culture (only those aspects which are enduring and historic are to count) and 'modernity' notions that are inclusive of recent changes.

A key challenge to researchers is the development of methodology and instrumentation to advance empirical study in the field of cross-cultural

educational leadership. There is need for both quantitative and qualitative methods. Having developed a mixed-method approach, relying on survey, interview and vignette data collection, our own work is now at the stage of publishing the first empirical results comparing school leadership in Hong Kong, Singapore and Perth, Australia. Through further empirical studies, we hope to refine our instrumentation and methodology and thus the theory that we build. In conducting cross-cultural studies of leadership, there is a strong argument for the formation of cross-cultural research teams, which combine 'insider' and 'outsider' perspectives.

An important purpose of this chapter has been to signal the possibilities and prospects of future research in the field of cross-cultural research in educational leadership. The following questions are illustrative of promising directions for future research:

- To what extent is it appropriate to transpose policies and practices of school improvement from one society to another without consideration of cultural context?
- How do sets of dominant values and practices associated with cultures and sub-cultures affect the meanings attributed to the implementation of change in schools and school systems? What meanings do key concepts such as 'collaboration', 'micropolitics', 'school-based management' and 'accountability' have in different cultural settings?
- In what ways do societal cultures and sub-cultures influence the practice of school leadership? For example, what influence is culture on the relationships between the school and its environment, including parents, and processes within the school, such as appraisal, teamwork and shared leadership?
- How can the development of cross-cultural research and understanding in educational leadership and management inform the issues associated with multicultural schools within societies? For example, in what ways might an improved knowledge base on cross-cultural education have application to how multicultural schools can better understand and serve their diverse communities?
- To what extent can the development of cross-cultural research contribute to a better understanding of globalisation and its relationship to policy formation, adoption, implementation and evaluation?

Conclusion

The potential benefits of a cross-cultural comparative approach to educational leadership – for scholars and practitioners alike – are attractive and enticing. The justification for studying leadership from a societal and cross-cultural perspective is not solely based on improving our knowledge of the similarities and

differences regarding school leadership and administration in other countries and systems. Rather, through adopting a cultural and cross-cultural 'lens', we can come to know more about our own systems of schooling, leadership and management.

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